United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Communications and
Project Management Division, DPI

Reference Paper No. 31
February 1992

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND OBSERVANCES

Two major United Nations Conferences related to development are being held in 1992. The eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development began on 8 February and will continue until 25 February, in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development is scheduled for 1-12 June, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names will be held at United Nations Headquarters from 25 August to 3 September.

For future years, several major conferences have been scheduled. In 1993 the World Conference on Human Rights will convene for two weeks at a venue to be confirmed. In 1992 and 1993, the Preparatory Committee for the Conference will meet in Geneva.

In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development, will have as its overall themes population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The venue of the conference has not yet been decided.

In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace will take place. The venue for the conference is to be decided in March 1992 by the Commission on the Status of Women.

At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly will consider the question of convening, possibly in 1997, a United Nations conference on human settlements (Habitat II), and decide on its objectives, content, scope and timing.

Preparations are now under way for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People (1993). The Coordinator for the Year is to convene a technical meeting early in 1992.

The following pages contain information on United Nations conferences and special observances scheduled for 1992 and ensuing years, as well as various internationally recognized decades, years, weeks and days.

For information media--not an official record

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Third Disarmament Decade
(1990s)

On 4 December 1990, the General Assembly declared the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade (resolution 45/62 A). At the same time it adopted the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade, the text of which had been prepared by the Disarmament Commission at the Assembly's request.

The Declaration stated that, despite a noticeable improvement during the latter part of the 1980s in the way many States conducted their relations, the specific goals of the Second Disarmament Decade (1981-1990) (resolution 35/46) had not been fully realized (the First Disarmament Decade was the 1970s). It identified common objectives of the international community in the 1990s, including: reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons; a comprehensive nuclear-test ban; strengthening the non-proliferation regime and halting and preventing nuclear-weapon proliferation and the arms race, particularly the nuclear-arms race; promoting cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy under agreed safeguards; preventing an arms race in outer space; reducing conventional arms and armed forces; a convention on prohibition of all chemical weapons and on their destruction; greater transparency in military matters; advancing the scope and techniques of verification; and promoting the use of science and technology for peaceful purposes. All other initiatives to halt and reverse the arms race deserved careful consideration. The goals should be included in a comprehensive programme of disarmament, and resources freed through disarmament could be used for the benefit of a balanced world development. The World Disarmament Campaign and the observance of Disarmament Week would continue to play a useful role in promoting dialogue by an informed public on issues.

Disarmament Week
(24-30 October)

The annual observance of Disarmament Week, which begins on the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, was first called for in the Final Document of the General Assembly's 1978 special session on disarmament (resolution S-10/2). States were invited to expose the danger of the arms race, propagate the need for its cessation and increase public understanding of the urgent tasks of disarmament. Governmental and non-governmental organizations were invited to undertake annual activities to mark the Week. At the Assembly's request, the Secretary-General drew up in 1979 the elements of a model programme for the Week, which might assist States in developing their own observances.

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OUTER SPACE

International Space Year (1992)

In December 1989, the Assembly endorsed the initiative of international scientific organizations and bodies to designate 1992 as International Space Year, during which international cooperation should be promoted and carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all States, taking into particular account the needs of the developing countries (resolution 44/56). On 11 December 1990, it urged Member States and international organizations to consider supporting United Nations efforts in connection with the Year (resolution 45/72).

On 9 December 1991, the Assembly recommended that in 1992 the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee should dedicate at least one meeting of their regular sessions to the Year. It urged Member States, international organizations and other funding sources to support the activities of the United Nations as part of the Year. It also reiterated its recommendation that Member States consider ways in which their activities for the Year could complement efforts under way for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (resolution 46/45).

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression (4 June)

On 19 August 1982, at its emergency special session on the question of Palestine, the General Assembly, "appalled at the great number of innocent Palestinian and Lebanese children victims of Israel's acts of aggression", decided to commemorate 4 June of each year as the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression (resolution ES-7/8).

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (29 November)

By a resolution adopted in December 1977, the General Assembly called for the annual observance, beginning in 1978, of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (resolution 32/40 B). (To be observed in 1992 on 30 November.)

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of All Colonial Territories, as well as Those in South Africa, Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Human Rights (Beginning on 25 May)

In 1972, the General Assembly appealed to the Governments and peoples of the world to observe annually, beginning on 25 May (Africa Liberation Day), a Week of Solidarity with the Colonial Peoples of Southern Africa Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Equal Rights (resolution 2911 (XXVII)).

In a decision adopted in November 1982, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the Special Committee against Apartheid, the United Nations Council for Namibia and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, changed the title to "Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Namibia and All Other Colonial Territories, as well as those in South Africa, Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Human Rights" (decision 37/421). Following Namibia's independence in 1990, the Week was renamed the "Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of All Colonial Territories, as well as Those in South Africa, Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Human Rights".

International Day of Solidarity with the Struggling People of South Africa (16 June)

In 1976, the General Assembly proclaimed 16 June the anniversary of the start of the 1976 uprising in Soweto and other areas, as the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggling People of South Africa, and called for its observance annually (resolution 31/6 I).

International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa (9 August)

In 1981, the General Assembly called for the annual observance of 9 August as the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa [and Namibia], and it appealed to all Governments and organizations "to provide generous contributions to the projects of the national liberation movements and front-line States for assistance to refugee women and children from South Africa" (resolution 36/172 K).

Day of Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners (11 October)

Observance of 11 October as a Day of Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners was proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1976 in a resolution demanding "the immediate and unconditional release of all persons imprisoned or restricted for their involvement in the struggle for liberation in South Africa" (resolution 31/6 C).

DEVELOPMENT

Fourth United Nations Development Decade (1991-2000)

On 21 December 1990, the General Assembly proclaimed and designated 1 January 1991 to 31 December 2000 as the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, and adopted an International Development Strategy for the Decade (resolution 45/199). The Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries (resolution S-18/3, annex) -- the major document of the Assembly's 1990 special session on international economic cooperation -- provided the basis for the Strategy.

The principal aim was to ensure that the 1990s would be a decade of accelerated development in the developing countries and of strengthened international cooperation, a period that would witness a significant improvement in the human condition in those countries and a reduction in the gap between rich and poor countries. Six interrelated goals were stated: a surge in economic growth in the developing countries; a development process that is responsive to social needs, seeks to reduce significantly extreme poverty, promotes the development of human resources and skills, and is environmentally sound and sustainable; improvement of the international money, finance and trade systems; a stronger and more stable world economy and sound macroeconomic management, nationally and internationally; strengthened international development cooperation; and special efforts to deal with the problems of the least developed countries.

Both a supportive international economic environment and determined national policies are required for the success of the Strategy. Setting forth changes needed to reactivate development, the Strategy offers recommendations for action in a number of economic areas: external debt, development finance, international trade, commodities, science and technology, industrial policies and agriculture. It gives special attention to the alleviation of poverty, human resource development, population problems and the protection of the environment. The special role and particular responsibilities of the United Nations are spelled out. A process of review and appraisal is an integral part of the Strategy.

* * *

The first world-wide effort to give substance, within a specific, reasonable span of time, to the undertaking in the United Nations Charter to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom and to employ international machinery to advance the economic and social development of all peoples resulted in the designation of the first United Nations Development Decade (the 1960s) in 1961 (resolution 1710 (XVI)). The Assembly called on Member States to unite in a sustained effort to break the cycle of poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease afflicting much of the world's population. Progress was made in a number of countries, but gains were offset by growing populations, unfavourable trade patterns and heavy debt burdens.

The need for a world plan to overcome those problems was recognized during the 1960s and, in 1970, the Assembly approved the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (the 1970s), which set forth targets for progress and expressed the commitment of Member States to carry out specific measures so that the goals could be attained (resolution 2626 (XXV)). The lowest-income developing countries, however, fell far short of the goals, and developing countries in general remained highly vulnerable to external economic forces.

In proclaiming the Third United Nations Development Decade (1981-1990), the Assembly adopted a new International Development Strategy calling for a "substantially greater effort in the 1980s" (resolution 35/56), than during the previous Decade. It set an official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of all economically advanced countries, growth-rate targets for developing countries in their gross domestic product, export expansion, and agricultural and manufacturing production, and an infant-mortality-rate-reduction target in the poorest countries.

The Strategy for the 1980s was an integral part of the efforts to establish a new international economic order whose aims were set out by the Assembly in 1974, in the Declaration and Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (resolution 3201 (S-VI)), adopted at the first of four special sessions on economic matters. Proclaimed at a time of growing world economic distress, the Declaration stated that the current international economic order was in direct conflict with current developments in international political and economic relations, and it stressed the severe repercussions of the crises in the world economy, especially on the developing countries. The Programme of Action outlined measures to be taken in regard to raw materials and commodities, world trade, industrialization, financing of development, monetary matters, control of transnational corporations, sovereignty over natural resources and special aid for the least developed countries.

At the second special session on economic issues (September 1975), the Assembly approved a framework for concrete negotiations in trade, financing for development, food and agriculture, and other subjects (resolution 3362 (S-VII)), and, in December 1977, affirmed that all global negotiations relating to the establishment of the new international economic order should take place within the framework of the United Nations system (resolution 32/174). Two years later, the Assembly expressed deep concern at the limited progress made in negotiations on international economic cooperation, and decided, therefore, to launch a round of sustained global negotiations at the third of its special sessions on economic matters, in August and September 1980 (resolution 34/138). That session, however, as well as the regular Assembly sessions that followed it, did not reach agreement on the procedures and agenda for the negotiations.

Since then, the Assembly has decided to keep open its agenda item on the launching of global negotiations in order to allow informal consultations to continue, and to reconvene at short notice to consider any decisions or agreements that might emerge from the negotiations.

A special session in April/May 1990, on international economic cooperation, reviewed problems facing the world economy and considered priority issues, including the need for recovery and revitalization of the economic growth and development of developing countries. The final Declaration of that session provided guidelines for the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade.

Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific (1985-1994)

Endorsing a recommendation of the Economic and Social Council, as proposed by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the General Assembly in 1984 proclaimed the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific during the period 1985-1994 (resolution 39/227).

The objectives for the Decade are to:

-- Raise the transport and communications infrastructural facilities of developing ESCAP member countries to a level commensurate with their development objectives and priorities, giving particular attention to the special needs of the region's least developed, land-locked and island developing countries;

-- Identify systematically and comprehensively the region's transport and communications problems and work out solutions;

-- Promote a more effective and efficient transport and communications network comprising all modes and means in an integrated way, in particular for development of intra- and interregional linkages, as well as network maintenance and coordination, tariff setting and physical planning; and

-- Encourage coordination and cooperation in transport and communications in the region.

Support for the regional action programme was sought from Governments and international organizations, particularly the United Nations Development Programme.

On 20 December 1991, the Assembly changed the period of the second quinquennium of the Decade to 1992-1996, to coincide with the period of the medium-term plan, namely 1992-1997, so that adequate preparations for a regional action programme may be made (decision 46/453).

Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (1991-2000)

In 1988, the General Assembly declared the period 1991-2000 the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa. At the same time, it endorsed a 1988 Economic and Social Council resolution noting a decision of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) that the institutional arrangements for the region's first Transport and Communications Decade (1978-1988) should be retained, with a two-year preparatory period between the end of the first Decade and the launching of the Second. Those arrangements included the Conference of African Ministers serving as the permanent policy-making body, ECA as the lead agency for preparing the programme for the Decade and for coordinating and monitoring activities, and the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee as the technical body accountable to the Conference of Ministers. The Assembly asked the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Organization of African Unity and African regional and subregional economic groups and United Nations agencies, to undertake the necessary preparatory arrangements (resolution 43/179).

The first Transport and Communications Decade in Africa had been proclaimed by the Assembly in 1977 with a view to preparing and implementing a global strategy for the development of transport and communications in Africa in order to solve the problems of the continent in this field, and for mobilizing the needed technical and financial resources (resolution 32/160). An ECA report evaluating the First Decade concluded that it had given a major boost to the future development of transport and communications by equipping Africa with a policy and strategy, as well as institutions and mechanisms for their implementation.

Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa (1990s)

On the recommendation of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the General Assembly in 1989 proclaimed the period 1991-2000 the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa (resolution 44/237). The Secretary-General, in consultation with the Director-General of UNIDO, the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other regional and United Nations bodies, was asked to undertake the necessary preparations for the Decade.

In December 1980, the Assembly, on the recommendation of UNIDO's General Conference held earlier that year, had proclaimed the 1980s as the first Industrial Development Decade for Africa, for the purpose of mobilizing greater political commitment to and financial and technical support for the industrialization of Africa (resolution 35/66 B). Priority was accorded to the formulation of industrial policies, strategies and plans, the development of core industries, industrial manpower, technological capabilities and institutional infrastructure, the development of energy technology and equipment, the promotion of intra-African industrial cooperation, the development of the least developed countries, the mobilization of financial resources and the popularization of the Decade.

In June 1986, at a special session focusing on African development problems, the Assembly adopted the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990. The continent was to launch long-term programmes for self-sustaining socio-economic development and growth, as elaborated in Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990, adopted by the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 1985. The international community committed itself to helping Africa achieve this objective. Implementation of the Priority Programme was to contribute to the realization of the goals of both the Industrial Development Decade for Africa and the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (resolution S-13/2).

Africa Industrialization Day (20 November)

In December 1989, the General Assembly decided that, within the framework of the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa, 20 November would be designated as Africa Industrialization Day, for the purpose of mobilizing the commitment of the international community to the industrialization of the continent (resolution 44/237).

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Eighth Session, 8-25 February, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia)

On 3 May 1991, the General Assembly took note of Trade and Development Board resolution 391 (XXXVII) of 22 march 1991, in which the Board took note of the communication circulated by Uruguay and expressed its understanding of the difficulties encountered by that Government to host the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and recommended that the meeting should take place at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 8 to 25 February 1992.

The Assembly welcomed the offer made by the Government of Colombia to host the Conference, and decided to convene the eighth session of UNCTAD at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 8 to 25 February 1992, to be preceded by a two-day meeting of senior officials (resolution 45/261).

ENVIRONMENT

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1-12 June, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

On 19 December 1991, the General Assembly urged, once again, that representation at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to take place at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 1 to 12 June, be at the level of Head of State or Government (resolution 46/168).

The Assembly decided that the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference should be held at United Nations Headquarters from 2 March to 3 April. It also endorsed the Preparatory Committee's decision that pre-session consultations on the Conference be held in Rio de Janeiro on 29 and 30 May.

In 1988, the Assembly had expressed its view that such a Conference was desirable (resolution 43/196). Accepting an offer by the Government of Brazil to host the Conference, the Assembly decided in 1989 that the Conference should coincide with World Environment Day, on 5 June (resolution 44/228). The Assembly affirmed that the Conference should elaborate strategies and measures to halt and reverse the effects of environmental degradation in the context of strengthened national and international efforts to promote sustainable and environmentally sound development in all countries, and listed the 23 objectives of the Conference. A Trust Fund for preparatory activities was established to back a number of support activities, and a Voluntary Fund for supporting developing countries participating in the Conference was also set up, to assist especially the least developed countries to participate both in preparations and in the Conference itself. The headquarters of the ad hoc Conference secretariat was established in Geneva; a secretariat unit was established in New York and one in Nairobi.

Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (18-28 February, New York)

The General Assembly on 6 December 1988 recognized climate change as a common concern of mankind (resolution 43/45), and on 21 December 1990 established an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (resolution 45/212). The Committee held four sessions in 1991.

On 19 December 1991, the Assembly decided that the Committee should hold a fifth session at United Nations Headquarters from 18 to 28 February, with the possibility of the Committee holding a short resumed session in New York in April, unless the Committee decided otherwise at its fifth session. The objective was to have an effective convention completed prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and opened for signature during that Conference (resolution 46/169).

World Environment Day (5 June)

The General Assembly has urged Governments and United Nations organizations to mark World Environment Day with activities reaffirming their concern for the preservation and enhancement of the environment. The date 5 June was chosen by the Assembly in 1972 to commemorate the anniversary of the opening day of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972), which led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (resolution 2994 (XXVII)).

POPULATION

International Conference on Population and Development (1994)

The Economic and Social Council on 26 July 1989 decided to convene an international meeting on population in 1994, under the auspices of the United Nations (resolution 1989/91). On 26 July 1991, the Council decided to call the meeting the International Conference on Population and Development (resolution 1991/93).

The objectives of the Conference are:

-- To contribute to the review and appraisal of the progress made in reaching the objectives, goals and recommendations of the World Population Plan of Action, approved at the United Nations Population Conference held in Bucharest in 1974;

-- To identify instruments and mechanisms ensuring the operational implementation of the recommendations;

-- To strengthen awareness of population issues on the international agenda and their linkage to development;

-- To consider the desired focus of action at the global, regional and national levels, as well as all necessary ways and means of treating population issues in their developmental perspective;

-- To adopt a set of recommendations for the next decade to respond to population and development priorities; and

-- To enhance the mobilization of resources for implementing the results of the Conference.

Population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development are to be the overall theme of the Conference. The Secretary-General of the meeting is the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund. The Deputy Secretary-General is the Director of the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (resolution 1991/93).

In 1992, regional preparatory meetings for the Conference will take place in Denpasar, Indonesia (19-25 August) for Asia and the Pacific; and in Dakar, Senegal (one week in October) for Africa.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Convening of a United Nations Conference on Human Settlements

On 19 December 1991, the General Assembly decided to consider at its forty-seventh session the question of convening, possibly in 1997, a United Nations conference on human settlements (Habitat II), with the view to taking a decision at that session on the objectives, content, scope and timing of such a conference, and the modalities and financial implications of holding the conference. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), to prepare a report on these matters, to be submitted to the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly (resolution 46/164).

NATURAL DISASTERS

International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990s)

In 1987, the General Assembly decided to designate the 1990s as a decade in which the international community, under United Nations auspices, would foster international cooperation in natural disaster reduction (resolution 42/169). The objective of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction is to reduce loss of life, property damage and social and economic disruption caused by natural disasters, such as earthquakes, windstorms, floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions, fires, insect infestations, drought and desertification. In 1989, an International Framework of Action for the Decade was adopted, setting out some of the activities to be undertaken at the national level as well as within the United Nations system (resolution 44/236). The Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation is the focal point for overview and coordination of the United Nations system's activities and programmes for the Decade. The Decade secretariat was established at Geneva, in close association with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator.

Goals of the Decade are to improve each country's capacity to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, to devise guidelines and strategies for applying existing knowledge, to foster scientific and engineering endeavours to close critical gaps in knowledge, and to develop and disseminate information on and evaluate the effectiveness of measures for assessing, predicting, preventing and mitigating natural disasters through programmes of technical assistance and technology transfer, demonstration projects, education and training. Governments are called on to establish, as appropriate, national committees to help attain the desired goals. They were also asked to keep the Secretary-General informed of their plans and of assistance that could be provided so that the United Nations might become an international centre for information exchange and the coordination of international efforts concerning activities in support of the Decade's goals.

As requested by the Assembly, the Secretary-General established a Trust Fund for the International Decade. He was also asked to establish a Special High-Level Council of internationally prominent persons to provide him with overall advice on the Decade, and an expert Scientific and Technical Committee to develop overall programmes to be taken into account in bilateral and multilateral cooperation for the Decade. On 18 December 1991, the Assembly encouraged the members of the Council to increase public awareness of the potential for disaster reduction and to raise financial support for the activities of the decade (resolution 46/149).

International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction
(Second Wednesday of October)

In December 1989, the General Assembly decided to designate the second Wednesday of October as an International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction (resolution 44/236).

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination
(1983-1993)

In 1973, the General Assembly designated the 10-year period beginning on 10 December 1973 (Human Rights Day) as the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, and it adopted a Programme setting forth the goals of the Decade and the measures to be taken at the national, regional and international levels to achieve them (resolution 3057 (XXVIII)).

In August 1983, at the end of the Decade, the Second World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination was held at Geneva (the first World Conference had been held in 1978). After considering the Conference's report, the Assembly noted with concern that, despite the efforts of the international community, the Decade had not attained its principal objectives and that millions of human beings continued to be victims of racism and racial discrimination. On the Conference's recommendation, the Assembly proclaimed the 10-year period beginning on 10 December 1983 as the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, and approved a Programme of Action for the Decade. It requested the Economic and Social Council to coordinate implementation of the Programme and evaluate the activities undertaken during the Second Decade (resolution 38/14).

The Programme of Action, for which a Trust Fund was established, calls for measures in the following areas: action to combat apartheid; education, teaching and training to create a favourable atmosphere for the eradication of racism and racial discrimination; dissemination of information and increasing the role of the mass media in combating racial discrimination; measures for the promoting the human rights of minorities, indigenous peoples and migrant workers; recourse procedures for victims of discrimination; implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and related international instruments; national legislation and institutions; seminars and studies; action by non-governmental organizations; and international cooperation.

In 1987, the Assembly approved a plan of activities submitted by the Secretary-General to be implemented during the second half of the Decade (1990-1993), and invited the international community to participate fully (resolution 42/47). Activities for 1992-1993 include expert meetings on the preparation of teaching materials to combat racial discrimination; additional language versions of the handbook of recourse procedures for victims of discrimination; workshops on legislation to combat discrimination; an international campaign on the main obstacles to eradicating discrimination and apartheid; a study on the treatment of political prisoners and detainees in South Africa; and a study of the dissemination of the International Convention. On 16 December 1991, the Assembly invited Governments, United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to participate fully in the activities scheduled for 1990-1993 and not yet carried out (resolution 46/85).

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March)

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21 March, the anniversary of the killing by South African police of some 70 Africans demonstrating peacefully against pass laws in Sharpeville, South Africa, in 1960. It was proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1966 (resolution 2142 (XXI)).

Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination (Beginning on 21 March)

As part of its programme for the first Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, the General Assembly, in 1979, called for the observance by all States of a Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination, beginning on 21 March (resolution 34/24).

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human Rights Day (10 December)

In 1950, the General Assembly invited all States and interested organizations to observe 10 December, the anniversary of the Assembly's adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as Human Rights Day (resolution 423 (V)).

World Conference on Human Rights
(1993)

In 1989, the General Assembly asked the Secretary-General to seek the views of Governments, organizations and other bodies concerned with human rights on the desirability of convening a world conference on human rights (resolution 44/156).

Having received those views, the Assembly on 18 December 1990 decided to convene in 1993, at a high level, a World Conference on Human Rights, to be funded through the regular United Nations budget. It was to review and assess progress in human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and identify obstacles and ways to overcome them; examine the relation between development and the enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights; examine how to improve implementation of existing human rights instruments; evaluate the effectiveness of and formulate recommendations to improve United Nations methods and mechanisms in this area; and recommend ways to ensure the needed financial and other resources for such United Nations activities (resolution 45/155).

The Assembly decided to establish a Preparatory Committee for the World Conference, open to all Member States or members of the specialized agencies, to make proposals for Assembly consideration on the Conference's agenda, date, duration, venue, participation, other preparatory meetings and documentation. Governments, the specialized agencies, and other organizations and United Nations bodies concerned with human rights were asked to participate in the Committee's work. The first session of the Committee was held at Geneva in September 1991.

On 17 December 1991, the General Assembly decided that the World Conference be convened at Berlin, for a period of two weeks in 1993. The Preparatory Committee is to meet at Geneva twice in 1992 and once in 1993. The Secretary-General of the Conference is the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights (resolution 46/116).

(On 18 February 1992, the Commission on Human Rights, meeting in Geneva, was told that the Government of Italy was willing to host the 1993 Conference. The offer came a day after the Commission was told that the German Government could not meet the requirements for hosting the Conference.)

In 1992, regional preparatory meetings for the Conference will take place in San José, Costa Rica (13-17 July) for Latin America and the Caribbean; in Bangkok, Thailand (24-28 August) for Asia and the Pacific; and in Tunis, Tunisia (2-6 November) for Africa.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

International Year for the World's Indigenous People (1993)

With a view to strengthening international cooperation to solve problems faced by indigenous communities in such areas as human rights, the environment, development, education and health, the General Assembly, on 18 December 1990, proclaimed 1993 as International Year for the World's Indigenous People (resolution 45/164), as recommended by the Economic and Social Council (decision 1990/248). Indigenous and other interested non-governmental organizations, as well as specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system, were invited to consider possible activities they could undertake in connection with the Year, for consideration by the Commission on Human Rights. The Secretary-General was asked to present a draft programme of activities to the Assembly at its regular 1991 session, based on recommendations of those bodies.

On 17 December 1991, the Assembly adopted the programme of activities for the Year. It also recommended the appointment of the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights as the Coordinator of the Year, with functional duties to be assigned to the Centre for Human Rights in conjunction with the Office of the Director-General for International Economic Cooperation and the International Labour Organisation. The Coordinator is to convene early in 1992 a technical meeting of agencies, regional commissions and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system with representatives of States, organizations of indigenous people and other relevant non-governmental organizations. The Secretary-General has opened a Voluntary Fund for the International Year. The opening ceremonies for the Year will be conducted at the Assembly's forty-seventh session (resolution 46/128).

WOMEN

World Conference on Women (1995)

In 1989, the General Assembly asked the Commission on the Status of Women to consider the question of holding a World Conference on Women in 1995 (resolution 44/77). The Commission's recommendation that such a Conference be held was embodied in a 1990 decision of the Economic and Social Council (resolution 1990/12) and endorsed by the General Assembly on 14 December 1990 (resolution 45/129), when it took note of an invitation by the Government of Austria to host the Conference. The Council had asked the Commission, as the preparatory body, to include Conference preparations in its 1991-1995 work programme. The Assembly asked the Commission to decide on the venue not later than 1992. The Secretary-General would submit to the Commission proposals on the preparation and convening of the Conference and appoint a Conference Secretary-General.

The purpose of the Conference would be to conduct the second review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000 (a five-year review had been undertaken by the Commission in 1990), adopted in 1985 at the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. The Conference would also determine what measures were needed to ensure that the Strategies achieved their objectives, provide a focus for national reviews and appraisals and a forum for exchange of experience, as well as set targets and mobilize interest in the issue. Regional preparatory meetings were mandated in three regions -- Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin American and the Caribbean -- for 1993 and 1994.

The Commission on the Status of Women decided on 8 March 1991 that the World Conference should be entitled "Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace" (decision 35/101). Considering the question of the venue of the Conference, the Commission took note of the offer made by the People's Republic of China to host the event, including a forum for non-governmental organizations. The Commission agreed to make known its decision during its thirty-sixth session, to be held at Vienna from 11 to 20 March (decision 35/102).

DISABLED PERSONS

United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992)

Observing that the International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) had contributed to the acceptance of the right of disabled persons to participate fully in the social life and development of their societies and enjoy living conditions equal to those of their fellow citizens, the General Assembly in 1982 proclaimed 1983-1992 the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and adopted the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, encouraging Member States to utilize this period to implement the long-term Programme (resolution 37/53).

In 1985, the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons was renamed the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, and the Secretary-General was authorized to receive special-purpose contributions to it (resolution 40/31). The World Programme of Action, for which the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna is the focal point, envisages that the Fund be used to meet requests for assistance from developing countries and organizations of disabled persons to further the implementation of the Programme.

The Assembly invited Member States to reinforce or establish national committees or similar bodies for the Decade at the highest level, with the participation of organizations of disabled persons, to plan, coordinate, encourage, participate in, publicize, monitor and evaluate activities in support of the Decade's objectives. In 1988, the Secretary-General appointed a Special Representative for the Promotion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. Later that year, the Assembly stressed that for the second half of the Decade, special emphasis should be placed on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons. It set out a list of priorities for global activities and programmes for the second half of the Decade that Member States and organizations were urged to undertake (resolution 43/98). On 14 December 1990, it invited States and United Nations and other organizations to use, as guidelines and stimuli for activities, its agenda for action until the end of the Decade and a preliminary outline of a long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond, which resulted from a feasibility study on alternative ways to mark the end of the Decade (resolution 45/91). On 16 December 1991, the Assembly reiterated the need to achieve the objectives set out in the agenda for action until the end of the Decade and beyond. It also decided to devote four plenary meetings at its forty-seventh session to mark the conclusion of the Decade (resolution 46/96).

THE ELDERLY

International Day for the Elderly (1 October)

On 14 December 1990, the General Assembly designated 1 October as the International Day for the Elderly. It appealed for contributions to the Trust Fund for Ageing -- which supports projects in developing countries in implementation of the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted at the 1982 World Assembly on Ageing -- and endorsed an action programme on ageing for 1992 and beyond as outlined by the Secretary-General (resolution 45/106).

THE FAMILY

International Year of the Family (1994)

In December 1989, the General Assembly proclaimed 1994 as International Year of the Family (resolution 44/82). This action was a follow-up to the Guiding Principles for Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future, adopted by an Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes (Vienna, September 1987) -- a global meeting of ministers and senior policy-makers concerned with social issues -- and endorsed by the Assembly in 1987 (resolution 42/125). The Principles had called for social welfare policies giving greater attention to the family. The main purpose of the Year is to enhance awareness of family issues and improve national institutional capability to carry out comprehensive policies to tackle the most serious family-related problems. Protection and strengthening of emotional, financial and material support between family members and between related families, including care for infants and children, the elderly, the sick and the disabled, are among the goals of a programme to be defined by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

On 14 December 1990, the Assembly welcomed the Secretary-General's designation of a Coordinator for the Year and the establishment of an organizational secretariat within the Social Development Division at Vienna. States were asked to establish national coordinating committees for activities connected with the Year (resolution 45/133).

On 16 December 1991, the Assembly welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of the Voluntary Trust Fund for the Preparation for and the Observance of the International Year of the Family. It approved for implementation the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report on preparation for and observance of the Year. It also invited all Governments, specialized agencies, regional commissions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned to step up efforts in preparation for the Year (resolution 46/92).

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997)

In 1986, the General Assembly proclaimed the period 1988-1997 the World Decade for Cultural Development, to be observed under the auspices of the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (resolution 41/187). The idea was first proposed by the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico City, 1982) and subsequently endorsed by UNESCO.

To be achieved through voluntary efforts by States, organizations and individuals, the Decade's four main objectives are: acknowledging the cultural dimension of development; affirming and enriching cultural identities; broadening participation in culture; and promoting international cultural cooperation. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO are to report biennially to the Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the progress of the Decade. On 19 December 1991, the Assembly invited the Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO to prepare a global mid-term review of the Decade, to be carried out by the Assembly at its forty-ninth session in 1994 (resolution 46/157).

DRUG ABUSE CONTROL

United Nations Decade against Drug Abuse (1991-2000)

On 23 February 1990, the General Assembly proclaimed the period from 1991 to 2000 the United Nations Decade against Drug Abuse. The proclamation appeared in the Political Declaration adopted at the Assembly's seventeenth special session, devoted to international cooperation against illicit production, supply, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (resolution S-17/2). The Decade would be devoted to intensifying and sustaining national, regional and international efforts to fight drug abuse on the basis of measures contained in the Global Programme of Action on drug control, adopted concurrently with the Declaration.

A Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline of Future Activities in Drug Abuse Control had been adopted at Vienna in 1987 at the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. National authorities and interested organizations were to use the Multidisciplinary Outline for developing and acting on strategies that would attack all aspects of the drug problem, including illicit demand, cultivation of illicit drug crops, trafficking, misuse of the banking system, and treatment and rehabilitation of drug abusers.

The strategies were to include measures to prevent and reduce drug abuse, with a view to eliminating illicit demand; to treat and rehabilitate drug addicts and re-integrate them into society; and to suppress illicit trafficking. Strategies to control the supply of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances addressed such questions as: eradication and substitution of illicit cultivation, eradication of illicit processing, production and diversion; maintaining a balance between demand and supply of licit drugs; cooperation with the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control and other United Nations bodies to elaborate a subregional strategy for drug abuse control; and establishment of monitoring and control mechanisms. States were asked to strengthen measures against profiting from drug trafficking, against illegal financial flows and against illegal use of the banking system, and to strengthen judicial and legal systems and measures against diversion of arms and explosives and against illicit transport of drugs.

As called for by the Assembly on 21 December 1990 (resolution 45/179), the structures and functions of the Division of Narcotic Drugs, the secretariat of the International Narcotics Control Board and the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control were integrated into a single United Nations International Drug Control Programme, based at Vienna. The Assembly on 16 December 1991 welcomed this integration (resolution 46/104), aimed at enhancing the United Nations structure for drug abuse control. It also welcomed the appointment of a Coordinator for the Decade, and invited the Coordinator to promote and monitor international efforts for the Decade (resolution 46/103).

International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (26 June)

Following a recommendation of the 1987 International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, the General Assembly, later that year, expressed its determination to strengthen action and cooperation at the national, regional and international levels towards the goal of an international society free of drug abuse, and decided to observe 26 June each year as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (resolution 42/112).

On 23 February 1990, in its Global Programme of Action against illegal drugs, the Assembly stated that the International Day was to be observed in the continuing effort to raise public awareness of the fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking, as well as to promote preventive measures (resolution S-17/2).

DECOLONIZATION

International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (1990-2000)

In 1988, the General Assembly declared 1990-2000 as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (resolution 43/47). On 19 December 1991, it declared that the ultimate goal of the Decade is the free exercise of the right of self-determination by the peoples of each and every of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Assembly adopted the proposal contained in the 12 November 1991 report of the Secretary-General to serve as a Plan of Action for the Decade, and invited Member States, the whole United Nations system, other governmental and non-governmental organizations to support and participate in implementing the Plan (resolution 46/181).

Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of All Colonial Territories, as well as Those in South Africa, Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Human Rights (Beginning on 25 May)

See under SOUTHERN AFRICA, p. 3

INTERNATIONAL LAW

United Nations Decade of International Law (1990-1999)

In November 1989, the General Assembly declared the period 1990-1999 as the United Nations Decade of International Law. It outlined the main purposes of the Decade as: promoting acceptance of and respect for principles of international law; promoting means and methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States, including resort to and full respect for the International Court of Justice; encouraging the progressive development of international law and its codification; and encouraging the teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law (resolution 44/23). The Secretary-General sought the views of Member States, international bodies and non-governmental organizations on the programme for the Decade.

The Assembly, on 28 November 1990, adopted a programme of activities, within the framework of the purposes of the Decade, to be undertaken by States, international organizations and United Nations bodies. The programme, to commence during 1990-1992, the first term of the Decade, had been drawn up by a Working Group of the Assembly's Sixth (Legal) Committee. As the coordinating body of the programme, that Committee was to continue to prepare the programme of activities for the Decade. To assist in implementing the programme, States, organizations and the private sector were asked to make contributions, and States were encouraged to establish national, subregional and regional committees. Non-governmental organizations were also encouraged to promote the Decade's purposes (resolution 45/40).

On 9 December 1991, the Assembly expressed its appreciation to States and international organizations and institutions that had undertaken activities to implement the programme. These States and international organizations and institutions were invited to provide information on their activities to the Secretary-General, who was to report, on the basis of such information, to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session (resolution 46/53).

Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names

The Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names will be held at United Nations Headquarters from 25 August to 3 September.

OTHER SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

World Population Day
(11 July)

In June 1989, the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme recommended that 11 July be observed by the international community as World Population Day. An outgrowth of the Day of Five Billion, celebrated on 11 July 1987, the Day seeks to focus public attention on the urgency and importance of population issues, particularly in the context of overall development plans and programmes, and the need to find solutions to the world's population problems.

International Day of Peace
(Third Tuesday of September)

In 1981, the General Assembly declared that the third Tuesday of September, the opening day of the regular session of the General Assembly each year, "shall be officially dedicated and observed as the International Day of Peace and shall be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples" (resolution 36/67).

World Habitat Day
(First Monday of October)

Acting on a recommendation of the Commission on Human Settlements, the Assembly, in 1985, designated the first Monday of October of every year as World Habitat Day. The first observance of the Day, in 1986, marked the tenth anniversary year of the first international conference on the subject -- Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (May/June 1976, Vancouver, Canada) (resolution 40/202).

World Food Day
(16 October)

The aim of World Food Day, proclaimed in 1979 by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, is to heighten public awareness of the world food problem and strengthen solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty. In 1980, the General Assembly endorsed observance of the Day in consideration of the fact that "food is a requisite for human survival and well-being and a fundamental human necessity" (resolution 35/70).

United Nations Day
(24 October)

The anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter -- 24 October 1945 -- has been celebrated as United Nations Day since 1948. It has traditionally been marked throughout the world by meetings, discussions and exhibits on the achievements and goals of the Organization. In 1971, the Assembly recommended that it should be observed as a public holiday by United Nations Member States (resolution 2782 (XXVI)).

International Week of Science and Peace (Week of 11 November)

In 1988, the Assembly proclaimed an International Week of Science and Peace, to be celebrated each year during the week in which 11 November falls, as a special week of action devoted to "science and peace", in order to generate and increase public interest in this topic (resolution 43/61). The date was chosen to retain the date of the first International Week of Scientists for Peace (10-16 November 1986). Institutions of advanced studies, scientific academies, professional associations and individuals were urged to hold during that week lectures, seminars, special debates and other activities conducive to the study and dissemination of information on the links between progress in science and technology and the maintenance of peace and security (resolution 45/70).

Other International Days

Other international days observed throughout the United Nations system include:

International Women's Day (8 March), World Meteorological Day (23 March), World Health Day (7 April), World Telecommunication Day (17 May), World No-Tobacco Day (31 May), International Literacy Day (8 September), World Maritime Day (during the last week in September), Universal Children's Day (varies; traditionally, first Monday of October), World Post Day (9 October), World Development Information Day (24 October), World AIDS Day (1 December), and International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development (5 December).

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